

Pleasant Introductions  
x I.

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What was you reading when I came in, dear Mr. Lomax?  
I am afraid I disturbed you."

Mr. Child; you know I am always glad to have you;  
and as for disturbing me, why, you know, there are  
friendships so close that the presence of another is  
no check upon communion. I was reading  
my old friend, my wise friend, 'Trench', whose  
sage & clear counsels have helped me over many  
a bad place in my life. Ah! I see, you don't  
recognise 'Trench' as you would 'Longfellow',  
or 'Coleridge'; I suppose I should have said  
the poems of Archbishop Trench."

I did not know he had written any poetry. I know  
- I mean, I have looked into, - his 'Parables', &  
'Miracles'; Father has them, you know, in his  
'Divinity Shelf.'

O yes, I know; I have done more than look into them,  
but - valuable works as they are, I am not prepared  
to write them on my list - <sup>particulars</sup> - of ~~most~~ <sup>most</sup> helpful  
friends. But here - between these green covers -  
how Irish, yes, I could make my friend  
over to you! But you are too young. How  
could I expect - a girl to care for the ripeness  
of wisdom, the broad & deep experience, the  
gentleness & liberality of soul, which are full  
of rest & refreshment - as well as of power  
& strength in an old woman like me!"  
- "Do you know, Mrs. <sup>Lomax</sup> ~~Young~~, I think you are  
making just - a wee bit - of a mistake?"  
- "Really?" and Mrs. Lomax refreshed herself  
with

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With a long look into the blushing countenance & smiling eyes of her young friend. "And what does my sweet Gwendolyn think I am doing?"

"Am I being pert? Please, don't mind! But don't you know that it is for those things I have given every bit of my heart - to you, & care for you less than for any girl friend I ever had! And Jessie ~~has~~ snatched too swift a kiss to give the white fingers time to move, shield her flowing hair on her friend's shoulder.

"How good of you as to me, Child! & I need not say, how dear! Cela va sans dire. But is it really true that you young things care so much about wisdom & experience?"

"Oh don't you see, Mrs. Somers, how ignorant & foolish we feel! Of course we know quite well that we don't know anything, & just that other people may not be up to us, we carry things off with a high hand, & make believe to believe in ourselves! But that's a great deadly secret - don't tell any one in the world, or where should we poor girls be?"

"Not I; & to reward you, I'll tell you a secret: when you dear girls come to us, we old people have to 'make believe very much', like the Marchioness & the orange peel wine, for if we didn't pretend to think you as wise as the Queen of Sheba at least, we should never get you foolish notions to have any confidence in yourselves at all. There now, we're quits!"

A clear ringing laugh from Jessie, then -

"Oh, if this is not delicious! Come just humming each



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just-hunting each other all round, each thinks  
the other doesn't! But now for 'Lunch!' do you  
think I may venture to be so intimate until I  
know him better? Well, what I want you to do  
is to introduce me to him. I can always  
find my way about - in a book so much  
better, when somebody who knows the road  
takes me for the first-time. It's a confession of  
youthful laziness, but - do you know I shall  
to open a book with 'Unexplored' on the back.  
I mean, when I don't know anything about the  
author or his works!"

"So do I, & I don't think it's laziness at all,  
for you might get into very barren country, or  
into a clough!"

"Oh, but that is not all. Were the country ever so lonely  
I should want come in to show me the best points  
of view; I should care for them after my own  
you know, & often come along, but I suppose  
I'm not clever enough to find them out the  
first-time for myself."

Now Emma paused for a minute or two: she was  
really debating with herself whether she should take  
the girl's tempting offer & lead her through some  
by-paths of literature dear to herself: the broad highways  
of fiction were familiar with; that is, if she  
did not know, she knew about most of your  
fictitious books - you had she not just left school? -  
And, somehow, to know about a thing takes the  
edge off curiosity; you don't want to know any  
more. The prospect was enticing: what would it  
be to set that bright young intelligence to share





"right?"

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"A capital text, & I believe you have hit on the best lines in the poem. Did you notice these?—

"In these high raptures there is nothing else,  
Nothing which we can rest on to sustain  
The spirit-long, or arm it to endure  
Against temptation, weariness, or pain?"—

"Yes, I noticed them the more because the writer had just been saying such beautiful things about the lady's voice. I should not have liked <sup>such lines</sup> them if they stood alone. Don't that just what people think now, that if we can give working-people 'high raptures'—music & painting & nice things about them—we shall be making them really happy & good? I have thought often that I should like—but then, that's too silly!"

"You have thought—that you would like to spend your life in beautifying <sup>those</sup> girls like yourself who live in a cordial way? I'm not sure that you could do better. Only bear one caution in mind:—has the most glorious concert you ever heard made you better the next-day, more earnest—a able to live a good day?"

"I'm afraid not, but isn't that my fault?"

"I doubt it; these delights <sup>to us</sup> they wear & thought are very pleasant, <sup>to us</sup> ~~about~~ <sup>in their way of thinking</sup> ~~they~~ <sup>it</sup> is a duty to spread them as widely as we can; but we must remember all the time that it is not by these things men live. Don't go on with our poet.

It is his sonnets which delight me most. Sometimes, the whole is a gem but almost always there is at least one gem like complete as full of truth & wisdom as of beauty: listen to this:—

"One rather may to tears unbidden rise  
The

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The meanest print - that on a cottage wall -  
then that he should care for <sup>more</sup> nothing but the works of  
some mighty master, because time come for art - should  
make him reverence the rudest attempt

'To win the beauty that is floating round  
Into abiding forms of peace & power'.

"Thank you; that is a lesson! You will think me  
very mean, but - do you know I'm sometimes  
afraid to admire a picture until I know some big  
person has painted it? And as you pass over the  
scripture prints in cottages! - I'm afraid I laugh!  
But that - a beautiful sensitive sort - pictures  
those lines show. And the last two - I don't  
see how Shakespeare himself could have said it  
better, & I'm sure Wordsworth could not."

"Perhaps not? The first line reminds me a  
little of Wordsworth but - I don't remember any lines  
of his that so <sup>possibly</sup> ~~exactly~~ hits off the museum part.  
But just - you call his sensitive nature - his  
power of feeling beauty in common things, here is  
an instance -

'How thick the wild-flowers blow about our feet; -  
we pass them by unheeded; but: if we pause a  
farther on & gaze into its beauty -  
Then if there cannot say

It wet with thankful tears into thy bosom, well!'"

"Oh, do you know. I have often felt that! The wood-  
anemone & the lesser celandine always make  
me cry. That is, if I just pick one & look into it; &  
- don't think me a baby, - kiss it!"

"Dear girl! Now, how much I could make you feel  
the chastened piety of the poet; - so simple & sweet -  
holiness for the market-place and - for the cloister! -  
Here is one example, in the sonnet - beginning,

'If sorrow come not near us,' sending thus, -  
'That we may not - when grief & pain are over  
With the much sin of our Almighty lover.'"



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"How beautiful!" cried Jessie, with eyes suppressed, "it is worth while to have written a book if only to have said those two last words. I shall never forget them." Then, looking up helplessly - "I dare say you older people think we girls have our sorrows, but you don't know how dreadfully things hurt! I'm sure every stroke my heart a great deal oftener than mother."

"I know it's true, dear; & Mrs. Lomax stroked the bright young head very tenderly: "You young things are all over sensitive fibres - the least unquieted touch will make you wince. You suffer far more readily than we tougher older people. Folks, but then, child, your joys are far more & more vivid. So let the young man rejoice in his youth!"

"Thank you for understanding! And that's why I like your poet - dear Mrs. Lomax - he quiets the joy, & comforts the sadness!"

"And that's why I like him! For the joy, listen to this, to his child -"

'Thy gladness makes me thankful every way,  
With this most-helpful ending, -

'Joy is of God, but heaviness & care,

Of our own hearts & what has harboured there.'

"But how are you to <sup>keep</sup> things that make you unhappy from 'harboring there'?"

"He has an answer for that, too; one of the most glorious of the sonnets - I mean, as it breathes of Christian experience; -

'Lord, what a change within us our short-hour  
Spend - in thy presence will prevail to make, -

Why imagine should we do ourselves this wrong,

That we should ever weak or heartless be,

Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer

And joy, & strength & comfort are with Thee?"

"Oh! I shall learn that, say it over & over when I am

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"am miserable! Don't laugh, indeed I am sometimes;  
mostly because in not a bit good or evil or anything  
any one could like if they could see into me!"

"Poor Jessie! Does this express it? —

"Lord, many times I am awfully guilty  
Of minding our self, my sin, my minority —

O, would you rather have Keble's —

"For what if Heaven's you once its secret light  
Sent to some partial eye, disclosing all  
The ugly bad thoughts, that in our bosoms might  
Wander at large, our head love's gentle threat!"

"How wonderful it is that poets should know ~~even~~  
the secret-thoughts we never tell to any one!"

"Ah, my dear, hardly so wonderful as you think!  
You young ones <sup>believe</sup> ~~think~~ that all the things sayings,  
high endeavours & miserable failures are the secret-  
histories of your hearts alone; we elders know  
that — our worst — ~~as~~ our best — is common to all  
human hearts — only this, some harbour the good  
& reject the bad; others, harbour the bad & scold out  
the good! Then, too, we, <sup>elders</sup> ~~then~~ hating ourselves, have  
learned to say with Keble —

"Take Thou my part — against myself, and there  
In that — fight bett."

O, with Keble, —

"The Lord who dwells on high  
Knows all, yet loves us better than we know."  
"Oh dear! life is confusing! And indeed it is  
a wonder that God can see us!"

"Something has gone wrong with my bright young  
Jessie today! But tomorrow she will forget — all  
these dark thoughts. In meantime, let us think  
about — something else. I want you to notice  
how our poet — behaves & quiets himself like a weaned  
child."



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child. It seems to have made a great fight with no  
pride that hereto all goes; & to keep a lovely child's  
heart in his high place was indeed a work of grace. Listen  
to this, -

'If that in sight of God is great -  
Which cometh itself so small,  
As by that low humility  
The chiefest - grace must call,  
Which being such, not knows itself  
To be a grace at all.'

"And I am so proud!"  
"Will this do?"

'When we have yielded to chasten & restrain  
Our wandering thoughts, -  
& indulge in delightful day-dreams, 'ourselves the centre'  
to wake up with 'scorn & sick dis-claims' to the every-day  
duties, -

'There in the world of hearing is their spell  
So nightly as at times like this to find  
Of years sitting by Samaritan well,  
Or teaching some poor fishers on the shore?' "

"O. Thank you! that will help me to keep my thoughts  
in order. 'sitting by Samaritan well? He was content  
spend himself upon one. But I thought - it was only  
foolish girls who built castles in the air! It is worth  
while to 'chasten & restrain' our thoughts when you  
know wise people have the same battles to fight. But -  
why don't you read."

'You cannot not to my place by accident.' -  
"No, no, I know & am so glad of?"

'Because I thought you would be sure to know it: you  
must read 'quietus Martyn'. There is much in it that  
you will feel has come out of your own experience: &  
some lovely lines: -

The beauty of the universe  
Was lying on me like a curse;  
Only the love surge at my feet -  
Uttered a soothing murmur sweet, As

As every broken weary wave  
Sinks faintly to a quiet grave,  
Dying on the bosom of the sea:

The cadences reminds you of those exquisite lines in the  
'Night Idyl,' you remember, -

'And right across the verdant sod  
Towards the very house of God,  
Comes gliding in with lonely gleams,  
Comes gliding in serene & slow,  
Light & silent - as a dream  
A solitary Idyl!'

Read me X 'The Monk & The Bird.'

Oh. don't - you like Longfellow's version much better?

'All about  
The broad, sweet-enchanted lay without  
Filling the summer air; - & soon, its  
delicious!'

"Yes, Longfellow catches the poetry of the situation here  
& French - prose! Do you think he would say  
'Save me from my friends'? All the same, he  
has this quality of the true poet - he gives you clear  
glass to look through, & his glass is a window  
thru' which you see many things. Too many for  
clear poets - for a painted window, rich & beautiful  
in itself, & casting rich reflections within, but -  
giving no more than rainbow hints of the  
landscape without."

"But I think I know what you mean: I have read  
really beautiful verses which only gave me a sense  
of ~~some~~ things delightful but - no clear thoughts. What  
a delicious taste we have had! And will you  
lend me your French? I want to read every  
line & find out new things for myself. I want to copy  
some of the sonnets, too, to say when I'm 'naughty'."

Charles W. Hanson  
(author of 'How Education')